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Texas Railroad Commission seismologist says he'll get to the bottom of earthquakes

The Texas Railroad Commission hired a seismologist to study the link between fracking, deepwater injection wells and earthquakes.

Dallas Business Journal

The Texas Railroad Commission hired a seismologist Friday who promises to get to the bottom of the earthquake activity [that rocked Azle and surrounding communities](#).

[David Craig Pearson](#), a former team leader at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, will start working at the commission, which regulates oil and gas in Texas, on April 1.

"My objective is to develop a broad understanding of the impact of oil and gas extraction activities on the day-to-day lives of Texas residents," Pearson said. "I believe the Railroad Commission must be able to quickly and factually determine the accurate location of all earthquakes in the state and be able to determine the cause of earthquakes, be they natural or man-made."

The area northwest of Fort Worth was rocked by [more than 30 earthquakes in a three-month span](#), rattling nerves and leaving cracks in the foundation and walls of some homes.

Environmentalists loaded many of the affected residents on a bus trip for Austin [so they could "shake things up" by attending a Texas Railroad Commission meeting](#).

To the east in Denton, residents are [circulating a petition to ban fracking in the city](#) and are suing the company that drilled within a few hundred feet of a neighborhood.

While residents in Azle may not need convincing, the oil and gas industry wants scientific proof before ruling whether [hydraulic fracking or waste water injection wells](#), where frack water is disposed of, are causing earthquakes.

"I plan to work to help clarify the root cause of earthquakes occurring by bringing all stakeholders' concerns, questions, ideas and insights together to identify the best possible solutions," Pearson said.

Chairman [Barry Smitherman](#), who lost a bid for the Republican nomination for Texas Attorney General earlier this month, said the commission will become proactive in determining the cause of seismic events.

Commissioner [David Porter](#), who [took flak in January for hosting a town hall meeting](#) in Azle without addressing resident concerns, [directed staff to hire a seismologist](#) to better coordinate with academic community on future research.

“This will allow our agency to further examine any possible correlation between seismic events and oil and gas activity and gain a more thorough understanding of the science and data available.”